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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0208  
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY 0290

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 001762

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ELA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/10/2018

TAGS: [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#) [EG](#)

SUBJECT: VOLUNTARY RETURN OF IRAQIS FROM CAIRO TO BAGHDAD

Classified By: ACTING MINISTER COUNSELOR FOR ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL AFF  
AIRS Yael Lempert for reasons: 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶1. (SBU) Summary. The Iraqi Embassy in Cairo and the Cairo office of the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) confirmed August 10 media reports that approximately 1000 Iraqis, many of whom have UNHCR refugee status, will return to Iraq from Egypt this week. The Iraqi Embassy, Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and UNHCR are working together to prepare for the first of four flights from Cairo to Baghdad on August 11, using Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's aircraft. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) UNHCR Deputy Regional Representative Katharina Lumpf confirmed August 10 that UNHCR is working with the Iraqi Embassy and the Egyptian MFA to facilitate the voluntary return of approximately 1000 Iraqis. The initiative was driven by increasing requests made by Iraqis to return home, according to Iraqi Charge d'Affaires Saad Ali and Lumpf. Refugees registered with UNHCR will make up a little less than half of the passengers on the first flight, with the remainder being Iraqis that have never filed for refugee status, according to Lumpf. She informed us that UNHCR will close its files on the repatriated Iraqis.

¶3. (SBU) Iraqi CDA Ali confirmed to us August 10 that Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki is sending his personal plane to Cairo, after the International Organization for Migration (IOM) advised Ali that it did not have resources to help with the movement. The first of four expected flights is scheduled to depart Cairo the morning of August 11 (UNHCR will be at Cairo airport to monitor all four flights). If additional flights are needed, Ali said that Maliki had assured him that the aircraft would be made available again.

¶4. (C) Comment: Iraqi Embassy officials told the local media August 10 that the GOI views the returnees as evidence of "great and tangible improvement in Iraq, especially in Baghdad." Ali estimates that there are up to 100,000 Iraqis in Egypt, and told us that he expects the flow of Iraqi returnees to increase. He believes that improved security conditions in Iraq are driving the up-tick in returns. But, he has complained previously that the GOE has been unhelpful in facilitating enrollment of Iraqi children in Egyptian schools, and the increase in returnees could partially reflect parental desires to ensure their children are enrolled in school this year.

SCOBAY